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SCHOOLS

Winchester opens doors to new $94M Lynch Elementary School

WILL DOWD | STAFF WRITER

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Families wait for the ribbon cutting on the brand new Lynch Elementary School on Aug. 25. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/WILL DOWD

The morning sun cast long shadows across the new universal pla
as hundreds of Winchester families streamed through the doors o

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community's latest educational investment Monday morning.

Parents carried toddlers past floor-to-ceiling windows while older siblings raced ahead to test interactive displays in the media center.

After nearly a year and a half of construction, the new Lynch Elementary School welcomed its first visitors during a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Aug. 25 that celebrated both architectural achievement and community commitment.

Hundreds of families and children gathered behind a red ribbon for the official opening ceremony of the $94 million Lynch Elementary School. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/WILL DOWD

In the building, 27 new classrooms equipped with interactive technology replace the cramped spaces of a 1961 structure originally built as a junior high school. Solar panels crown the building and shade parking areas below, marking Winchester's transition toward sustainable education infrastructure.

Chris Nixon, vice chair of the Winchester Educational Facilities and Planning Committee, traced the project's journey from groundb completion during Monday's ceremony.

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Chris Nixon — vice chair of the Winchester Educational Facilities and Planning Committee — traced the project's journey from groundbreaking to completion during Monday's ceremony. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/WILL DOWD

"It's actually been 519 days since a gray and windy afternoon just over by the brook, when we broke ground on this exciting project," Nixon said. "And what an exciting project. It is a three-story, 104,000 square foot, all electric elementary school with 27 K-5 classrooms and an expanded preschool."

The celebration unfolded across multiple levels and outdoor spaces. Families sampled cupcakes decorated with school logos in the bright cafeteria while children explored specialized learning environments. The gymnasium echoed with bouncing basketballs as parents admired the regulation court with its gleaming maple floors.

Principal Chrissy Capodanno, entering her third year leading Ly
21st in Winchester schools, reflected on the transformation from

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building's previous incarnation.

Principal Chrissy Capodanno speaks to families gathered for the new Lynch Elementary School opening ceremony. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/WILL DOWD

"The old building actually started out as a junior high — I'm not sure exactly when it switched, maybe in the '80s, to an elementary school," Capodanno said. "It still had the little lockers and some features that didn't quite fit, but we made it work, and it was great in its own way. It was big and all on one level, which I really liked. But this new building is on a whole different level — it's so interactive. We have a STEAM room now, and the media center is just unbelievable."

State partnership proved essential to the project's success. The Massachusetts School Building Authority contributed $25.2 million toward construction costs, with Winchester voters approving their local share through a debt exclusion override that passed in January 2023.

Mary Pichetti, executive director of the state building authority, emphasized the collaborative nature of the achievement during her remarks.

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"Today marks the third core program project completed in partnership between the town and the MSBA, since the MSBA's creation in 2004," Pichetti said. "We are delighted to be here today to celebrate Winchester's investment in its children."

Four children use an interactive digital display in the new library during the school's public tour. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/WILL DOWD

The new facility addresses space constraints that affected specialized programming for years. Preschool classrooms scattered across multiple district buildings now operate under one roof, with bathrooms and fixtures sized appropriately for 3- and 4-year-old learners.

Sarah Casey, the preschool supervisor, described the significance of the consolidation.

"Well, we've always had preschool, OK, so we've always had it, b
been spread out through the district, and we've been moved around, and

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so for us to all come back together under one roof sure is, I think, pretty special," Casey said. "Lynch now becomes kind of a preschool through grade five building, but the preschool will still service all five elementary schools in Winchester."

Art teacher Lisa Gualtieri is all smiles as she speaks with families during tours in her state-of-the-art classroom. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/WILL DOWD

Special education programming also benefits from expanded dedicated space. The autism program now operates four classrooms with specialized teachers and teaching assistants, replacing shared arrangements that limited learning opportunities.

Sara Brothers, who teaches in the autism program serving grades three through five, emphasized the educational impact of adequate facilities.

"A lot of times we had shared spaces, so multiple teachers in one [illegible] which is hard for the learning," Brothers said. "I think just having enough

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space for the students to learn is great."

Enhanced access to specialized spaces allows students to participate more fully in school programming. Where autism program students previously received art and music instruction in their regular classrooms, they now move to dedicated studios.

"We have four autism classrooms," Brothers said. "It's nice that we have different classrooms that we can go to. I love it."

Art instruction exemplifies the facility's educational improvements. Years of mobile programming, with supplies transported on carts between classrooms, gives way to a dedicated studio with proper equipment and workspace.

Lisa Gualtieri, the school's art teacher, recalled the challenges of the previous arrangement, living a nomadic lifestyle.

"Last time, I had a beach cart. And I would bring my supplies on a beach cart," Gualtieri said. "And we were art on a cart, and we didn't have sinks for water."

Now she has three sinks, pottery wheels and a kiln, enabling programming previously impossible in the old building. When Gualtieri inquired about basic amenities during the design process, architects exceeded her expectations.

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Families explore the modern hallways during the ribbon-cutting ceremony for Winchester's new Lynch Elementary School. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/WILL DOWD

Sustainability features distinguish the building as Winchester's first all-electric, net-zero school. Solar installations on the roof and over parking areas will generate sufficient energy to offset the building's consumption, advancing municipal climate goals.

Pichetti highlighted the environmental achievement during her address.

"As Winchester's first all-electric, net-zero facility, the building will be powered entirely by rooftop and parking-canopy solar panels, as Winchester transitions to a fossil-fuel free future," she said.

Financial support from the state increased during construction as material costs rose.

"In recognition of the increasing construction costs and thanks to the legislation passed in 2023, in October 2023 the MSBA Board approved an increase to the original grant providing an additional $4.9 million for an estimated maximum grant of approximately $25.2 million towar facility," Pichetti said.

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Children test the new playground equipment at Lynch Elementary School during the weekday celebration. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/WILL DOWD

Community support for educational infrastructure has strengthened over successive projects. Winchester voters have approved school construction initiatives with increasing margins, reflecting confidence in long-term planning and fiscal management.

Nixon noted the pattern of growing voter support during his remarks.

“It bears repeating, and I want our MSBA friends to take note that in January of 2011, 59% of Winchester voters said yes to a new Vinson-Owen School,” Nixon said. “Over three years later, 68% of voters said yes to a new Winchester High School. And in January of 2023, 80% of voters said yes to a new Lynch school.”

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Cupcakes decorated with the Lynch Elementary School logo are displayed during the ribbon-cutting celebration. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/WILL DOWD

Alumni perspectives underscore the necessity of replacement. Toure Payton attended Lynch Elementary from second through fifth grades before the building's limitations became untenable for modern educational standards.

"The only problem that I had with it was the bathrooms," Payton said of the old school. "It was a really old school, and that came with a certain nostalgia."

Current enrollment approaches 485 students, with the building designed to accommodate more than 500. Three separate playground areas serve different age groups while maintaining community access through a dedicated public space.

The project represents more than infrastructure replacement. Specialized programming for diverse learners, sustainable design principles and community gathering spaces reflect Winchester's educational values and environmental commitments.

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State officials praised the collaborative approach that enabled the project's success. Pichetti acknowledged the local teams and contractors who transformed architectural plans into educational reality.

Children cut the ribbon to officially open Winchester's new Lynch Elementary School. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/WILL DOWD

"Our thanks to Winchester and its team, Hill-International, Tappe and Brait, who have worked diligently to create and build a forward-thinking project, committed to project based learning and real-life experiences," she said.

As Monday's celebration continued into the late morning, families explored classrooms and corridors that will soon fill with daily learning. Children tested swings on playground equipment while parents gathered in small groups, sharing anticipation for the upcoming school year.

School officially opens on Thursday, Sept. 4.

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Winchester High School club hopes art contest will foster interest in Black history, culture

When then-freshman Christie Clark approached Carson Sarpong about becoming a co-founder for her club, Black Student Union, he was hesitant. Three years later, Sarpong is the president, and the club has organized the Black History Project, a contest that invites students to create art about Black history and culture. The

TAVISHI CHATTOPADHYAY | CORRESPONDENT

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SCHOOLS

Winchester High School's speech and debate team sees a meteoric rise

Winchester's speech and debate team, like most things, began with only a handful of students competing in its inaugural year and receiving little attention from the school. Yet now, what began as a modest club for fun, has grown into something significant and respected by the entire Massachusetts debate

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Winchester High School Athletic Department reschedules open house for 8th graders

The following was submitted by the Winchester High School Athletics Department: On Monday, Feb. 2, the Winchester High School Athletics Department will be hosting its rescheduled open house night for 8th graders from 6:30-8:30 p.m. in the auditorium. Come to an informational meeting, meet the coaches, learn

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EVENTS

Winchester High School Black Student Union launches 'Black History Project' contest, community showcase

The following was submitted by the Black Student Union at Winchester High School: The Black Student Union (BSU) at Winchester High School (WHS) is proud to announce the launch of the Black History Project, a contest designed to foster education, research, and creative expression surrounding Black history and culture. The

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Winchester School Committee candidates bring contrasting backgrounds to Thursday forum

Two candidates for Winchester's School Committee will face voters at a forum as the district navigates a new literacy curriculum, budget pressures and questions about student mental health. Heather von Mering and John Bellaire are competing for an open seat on the School Committee, which oversees a budget von

WILL DOWD | STAFF WRITER

March 4, 2026

'Chicago: Teen Edition' dances onto the Winchester High School stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents "Chicago: Teen Edition," a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. Set in the 1920s, this iconic production is sure to leave the audience wanting more. Performances will

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EVENTS

Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents 'Syldason: You Are Welcome Here'

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

March 4, 2026

NEWS

Rep. Michael Day helps House colleagues pass sweeping energy affordability bill

The following was submitted by the Office of Rep. Michael S. Day: Rep. Michael S. Day and his colleagues in the House of Representatives recently passed energy affordability legislation that would result in over $9 billion in savings for utility ratepayers over the next 10 years. The bill maintains critical

March 4, 2026

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